



U.S. Department of Justice

Ronald C. Machen Jr.
*United States Attorney for the
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center
555 Fourth St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530*

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For Information Contact:

Public Affairs

(202) 252-6933

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Former District of Columbia Teacher Pleads Guilty To Failing to Register as a Sex Offender - U.S. Marshals Service Tracked Defendant to Ohio -

WASHINGTON - A 42-year-old former District of Columbia teacher, Anthony Ross, pled guilty today to a federal charge of failing to register as a sex offender, announced U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., and Thomas Hedgepeth, Acting U.S. Marshal for the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

Ross, who was convicted of a sex offense involving a minor in 1999, was required to register as a sex offender. However, according to the government's evidence, he later moved to Ohio and did not notify authorities or register as a sex offender there. He was apprehended last fall by the U.S. Marshals Service, which has launched a nationwide initiative targeting such crimes.

Ross entered his guilty plea in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia before the Honorable Paul L. Friedman. Ross's sentencing is set for September 22, 2011. He faces up to 10 years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000, and the possibility of a lifetime of supervised release.

Ross is the first defendant to be indicted and convicted in the District of Columbia under the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act, which requires anyone convicted of sex crimes under federal law, or anyone convicted in state court and traveling in interstate commerce, to register with law enforcement agencies where they live, work or are a student.

The government's evidence proved that Ross was convicted in 1999 of sexual abuse for having sexual relations with a 15-year-old student while the defendant was a 30-year-old teacher and attendance counselor and assistant football coach at H.D. Woodson High School in Washington. In November 1999, at his sentencing in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, Ross was ordered to register as a sex offender for 10 years. He also was required to

spend 120 days in a work release program and serve 18 months of probation.

As a result of this conviction, Ross was considered a sex offender and was required by the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act and by the District of Columbia to register as a sex offender in Washington, D.C., and to advise the District of Columbia of any changes in his residence and employment. In December 1999, the defendant signed a notice that stated, "I understand that I have a duty to report ... any changes of home, work or school addresses."

Sometime between January and July of 2009, Ross moved from Washington, D.C., to Ohio. He did not notify authorities in the District of Columbia of his move or his change in address and employment, nor did he register as a sex offender in Ohio. Ross also used a false date of birth and a false social security number to avoid detection while living in Ohio.

As part of an overall strategy to combat child exploitation, the U.S. Marshals Service launched a nationwide operation last year to target sex offenders who knowingly fail to comply with their sex offender registration requirements. In Ross's case, the U.S. Marshals Service used social networking sites and other investigative tools to track the defendant to Gahanna, Ohio. He was arrested there on October 9, 2010.

"The sex offender registration laws are designed to give law enforcement and the public the information needed to protect our community from future sex crimes," said U.S. Attorney Machen. "Today's conviction demonstrates a new effort to use federal law to ensure that sex offenders do not flout the registration requirements and that they remain under the watchful eye of law enforcement."

"The dedication and professional excellence displayed by all of the Deputies involved is reflective of the commitment of men and women of the U.S. Marshals Service for the Superior Court to protect our community," said Acting U.S. Marshal Hedgepeth. "We look forward to continued collaborative efforts with the U.S. Attorney's Office and other law enforcement agencies in safeguarding our community and its citizens."

The Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act is part of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act in 2006. The Adam Walsh Act also provides for the use of federal law enforcement resources, including the U.S. Marshals Service, to assist the states in locating and apprehending non-compliant sex offenders.

In announcing the guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen and Acting U.S. Marshal Hedgepeth commended the outstanding investigative work of the U.S. Marshals Service's Superior Court Warrant Squad, and particularly Deputy U.S. Marshal Floriano Whitwell, who conducted the investigation and tracked the defendant to Ohio. They also thanked the Deputy U.S. Marshals in the Southern District of Ohio, who apprehended Ross after they received a lead from the investigators in the District of Columbia. Finally, they praised the work of Assistant U.S. Attorney Catherine K. Connelly, who is prosecuting the case.